

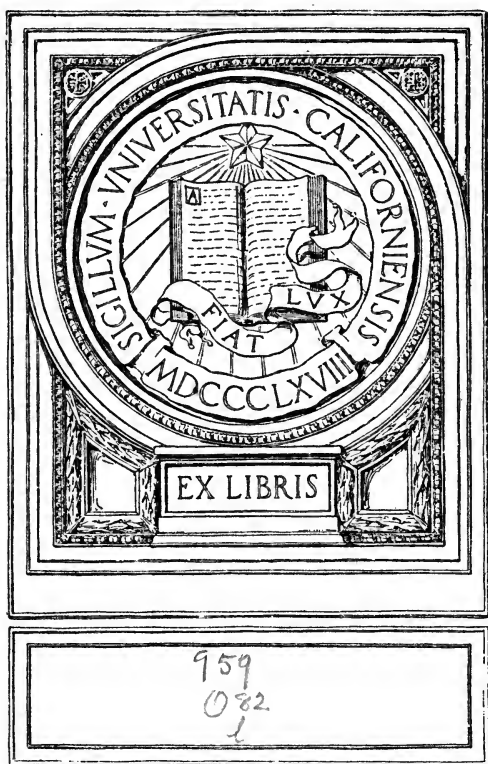
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THE LIGHT FEET
✻ ✻ OF GOATS ✻ ✻

Shaemas O'Shea



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The Light Feet of Goats

POEMS

by

SHAEMAS O SHEEL

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DREAMS AND THE WORLD λ

I will not lose grasp of the world because of my
dream;
Because of my dream I cannot lose grasp of the
world;
Heed not the ways of the creepers, O dreamers of
dreams,
Dreams are the light feet of goats on the crags of the
world!

HE WHOM A DREAM HATH POSSESSED X

He whom a dream hath possessed knoweth no more
of doubting,
For mist and the blowing of winds and the mouth-
ing of words he scorns;
Not the sinuous speech of schools he hears, but a
knightly shouting,
And never comes darkness down, yet he greeteth
a million morns.

He whom a dream hath possessed knoweth no more
of roaming;
All roads and the flowing of waves and the
speediest flight he knows,
But wherever his feet are set, his soul is forever
homing,
And going, he comes, and coming he heareth a
call and goes.

He whom a dream hath possessed knoweth no more of
sorrow,
At death and the dropping of leaves and the fading
of suns he smiles,
For a dream remembers no past and scorns the desire
of a morrow,
And a dream in a sea of doom sets surely the
ultimate isles.

He whom a dream hath possessed treads the impalpable
marches,
From the dust of the day's long road he leaps to a
laughing star,
And the ruin of worlds that fall he views from
eternal arches,
And rides God's battle-field in a flashing and
golden car.

THE FIELD OF DUST

This is the field of dust.
Spear-flash and sword-thrust
Wages the battle here,
Aye, and long must!
How does the field appear?
Much as a flowery place
Reft of its vernal grace,
Trampled under the race,
Blood in a crust,
Wreckage and dust,
Only that there and here
Virginal vales appear;
Yet all the atmosphere
Darkens with dust!

Who is it, foul of face,
Leads a foul host apace
Into this frightened place?
Lo, he is strong!
All the winds shrink and flee,
Curdles the earth, yet see!
They own his majesty,
Loathsome and strong!
Lo, he is known too well,
He is the Khan of Hell,
Regent is he of Wrong,
Lord of this reeling throng,
Reeling and whirling long,
Savage and fell;
Leads he this host obscene,
Miring the world's live green,
Leaving no waters clean,
Chanting a spell
Whereat the Heavens flame

Scarlet with wordless shame,
And all the world's fair fame
Crashes to Hell!
Delicate things are dashed
Doomward, fair temples crashed
Terribly, heroes slashed
Unto the bone;
Woe to all things that grow
Upward, and wail and woe
Unto the fair, follow
That host alone!
Ah that the green and fair
Valleys of anywhere
Must know and must,
Such a dark armament,
Fouling the firmament,
Making a flowery zone
Dark field of dust!

Spear-flash and sword-thrust
Wages the battle here,
Where there was once the grace
Of a calm sunny place—
Ah that was yester-year!—
Now it's a hosting-place,
Dark field of dust!

This is the field of dust.
Spear-flash and sword-thrust
Wages the battle here,
Aye, and long must!
See what bright wings appear
Over the dust!

Who is it, glad with grace,
Morning upon his face,

Swifter than light apace
Pierces the dark,
Strikes to his mark,
Glorifies all the place,
Laying the demons stark?
Hark to his clarion, hark,
Sunlight made audible,
Glad with a golden spell,
Golden with grace!
White all his warriors are,
Each spear a piercing star,
Lending a light to war;
And every face
Blends wrath and pity so
Scarce need they strike a blow;
Fair things that used to grow
In this sad place
Look up and glorify
Once more the infinite sky,
And the foul demons fly
Shrieking, and fall and die,
Dumb with disgrace.
Surely his name is known
Close to the Infinite Throne,
Sure it must spell
Strength of The Living God—
Hail, Mich-a-el!

Spear-flash and sword-thrust
Wages the battle here,
Aye, and long must!
What is the field of dust?
What are the hosts that here
Robed with red wrath appear,
Hot with war-lust,
Dark mace and starry spear

Splint'ring in mad career,
Clouding a world so fair
Dark with the dust?
Ah, not from Heaven or Hell
Host they who wage so well;
Lucifer, Mich-a-el
Are not their names;
Their strength no miracle
Of power Celestial,
Nor of the Flames.
And the broad battle-place
Where they meet face to face
Bruiting their claims,
Is no terrestrial strand,
No astrologic land;
I am those valleys, and
I am their names!

I am the field of dust,
I, who am body and soul;
I am the muster-roll
Of all the demons foul;
I am the splendid whole
Legion whose spears extol
God, whose sword-thrust
Gilds the dark dust.
Here does the battle roll
Endless, and must.
I am the Khan of Hell,
Regent am I of Wrong,
I am God's angel strong,
I, Mich-a-el.
Out of the deeps of me
Throng the red cavalry,
And the white angels, see,
In my soul dwell.

Naught can assail me, naught
Cause the red ruin wrought
But my own lust,
And I can trust
Naught but my God-hood, naught;
Here in the dust
Fight I forevermore,
And my own strength outpour,
Spear-flash and sword-thrust;
I am the spear and sword,
I am the Fiend and Lord,
I am the field of dust,
I am the field of dust,
Life's rage on me out-poured,
Fight I with spear and sword,
Aye, as I must;
I am the Fiend and Lord,
I am the flash and thrust,
I am the field of dust,
I am the dust.

THE PITILESSNESS OF DESIRE

Cease, cease, implacable desire,
Cease, cease!
The endless ways no longer, for I tire!
I who went forth mantled with morning fire
Pray now surcease
And peace—peace!

O passionate, terrible, futile, fierce desire,
Imperative and vain!
Blow not again
Your irresistible trumpet, and your lyre
Sound not again;
Once in their notes I heard a spirit choir:
Now only pain.

Whispers at my young soul, blood in the heart,
Limbs of the leaping goat—aye, these I had,
And spurned a myriad summits gained, to start
Down thru new vales to newer hills apart;
And I was glad
To be insatiable, impossibly mad
For more—more—knowledge, wisdom, passion, art!

But now release
Your broken bondsman from his broken bond;
What is beyond
This, and the next horizon, and beyond
The last horizon, could not give me peace:
That I have learned at last, and therefor cease
The bloody goad and the illusory wand,
Cease, cease!

Cease, cease:
My life's a burning arrow shot in the dark,

Fearfully arching heaven to find no mark;
Must it be always warfare, never peace?
Nay, then I ground my arms, I will not hark
The old command; so maybe you will cease!

This is the end of all, I quench the fire.
Calm of the hills, of rooted flowers and trees,
Have some right to my love, and now to these
I turn because their service will not tire.
My staff, my scrip, my cloak, into the pyre!
—Yet—what high vision thru the hot flame flees?
O Protean pitiless perilous dread desire,
Cease, cease!

THE SEEKER OF ROSES GOES ASTRAY

Where is the valley of poppies?
I have lost my way—
I sought the valley of roses.

But I went astray.
I can never find the roses.
I want the poppies to-day.

Where is the valley of clover?
I am wandering.
They would not know me a lover,

And they are kind to everything:
Show me the valley of clover,
I promise not to sing.

I will watch them singing,
Clover-sprites-of-the-sun,
I will laugh for their joy.

But show me a vale, anyone.
The roses would not cloy,
But I've lost them, that is done.

Maybe I found and bruised them,
Is that what you say?
Maybe—I will not tell.

But I am astray:
Where are the poppies, the clover?
Show me some way!

THE LOVER ENVIES AN OLD MAN

I envy the feeble old man
Dozing there in the sun.
When all you can do is done
And life is a shattered plan,
What is there better than
Dozing in the sun?

I could grow very still
Like an old stone on a hill
And content me with the one
Thing that is ever kind,
The tender sun.
I could grow deaf and blind
And never hear her voice,
Nor think I could rejoice
With her in any place;
And I could forget her face,
And love only the sun.
Because when we are tired,
Very very tired,
And cannot again be fired
By any hope,
The sun is so comforting!
A little bird under the wing
Of its mother, is not so warm.
Give me only the scope
Of an old chair
Out in the air,
Let me rest there,
Moving not,
Loving not,
Only dozing my days till my days be
done,
Under the sun.

A NEW YEAR PENNY

There'll be small change in time and tide
When the invisible gates swing wide
To one more too-much-hoped-for year;
Why should we flatter away one tear
When still so many must abide?
The Infant Christ of yesterday,
Before the months have turned to May
Must wear the Thorn and know the Cross.
Oh never doubt that grief and loss
Wait at the portals there with joy.
What then shall stamp this hard alloy
With steadfast and unchanging worth,
Making it precious in heaven as on earth?
Christ and our hearts know well thereof:
We mint Life's coin with dies of Love!

THE DOOM OF POETS

It is only a little sheaf we gather
For all the laboring days,
And few at last are the dreams we have,
Tho the nights are long;
And our hearts are doomed to ashes,
And yet their flames
Light such a little space in the dusk of Time!
This is the doom of those whose desire is unbounded,
To feel in the dark,
With groping hands,
The wall insurmountable;
To look forever on gold unwrought and on gems unset;
To feel forever in wind and water,
In wood and meadow,
In mountain and valley,
More than the mind understands or the lips can utter;
This is our doom, we weavers of Time's pale garlands,
To seek forever, and find not, the Rose and the Poppy,
The Clover and Orchid, we dream of in secret dreams.

THE SADNESS OF ART

What we harbor most at heart
Never finds a word to hold it;
Melodies that could unfold it
Still elude our utmost art;
What we put in paint and granite,
Doing so our noblest duty,
Tells the world of wondrous beauty
While we weep to see and scan it.
That is why we go despairing
In a world of love and laughter,
Heed no past and no hereafter,
Find no rest in all our faring;
That is why we are the sad;
How can hearts of ours help breaking?
Still unmade for all our making!
Naught to tell the dream we had!

TO MY MASTER OF SONG

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

I

"O sweet immortal singer still your song,"
I cried "for it has filled me like the flame
Of strong wine poured on the fire of the mind,
Yea it has mastered me like wine too strong,
And in men's mouths a light thing is my name:
'Echo', they say, 'of that song-laden wind.' "

II

"Nay, as I sing, sing you," I dreamt he said,
"Cadence for cadence, if it be but true
That to my breath your heart is as a lute.
Think you I know not that when I am dead
A company of greater ones than you
Will say 'Had he not sung, we had been mute?'"

MY SONG SUPREME

Its lines are all unwritten, and afar
In secret caverns of the morning, wait
The melodies it claims from passive fate;
And in the nebula of an unborn star
Unborn its words of burning wisdom are.
But the winged magic that must guide it straight
To opening hearts, will call me soon or late
From some far wind, some word vernacular.
O there will be rare revelry in my soul,
As when a king's house glows with sudden sound
To hail the new-born man-child of a king,
And where the immortal stars of beauty roll
Thru the vast heavens of thought that have no bound,
New flame will leap when my true song I sing.

THE DILETTANTE WAKENS

Out of the dim forest
Show me the way,
I am fain at last
Of night and day,
I am weary at last
Of unwearying peace
Where toil begins not
And cannot cease.
I have lain too long
In a purple bed,
Of nuts and honey
Too long I've fed,
The rose and poppy
Too long have shed
Ineffable langour
On my head.
Grey and silver
And fawn and mauve,
Dim lakes beneath,
Dim skies above,
Pale wine, pale women,
Pale petals shed,
These did I love
In the life I led.
Alas, Alas
For my soul that went
Into the air
On a song soon spent,
With grief not laden
Nor merriment!

Out of the dim forest
I will away!
I will know day

When the strife is sorest,
I will know night
When, Life, thou pourest
Balm on the wounds
Well-earned in the fray
Bright stars will gleam
In the ale I quaff
And a jolly company
Catch my laugh,
And the meat be red
As the ale is yellow,
And many a fellow
Share board and bed,
Till I find at last
On a day all gold,
A woman bold
To cleave to me fast
On a raging sea,
In a forest vast,
In a harsh city,
Till the end be past
Of a life lived free
As seed broadcast!

EXULTATION

When the full-bosomed and free-limbed Spring
Roaring her rousing and lusty song
Comes along
With a swirl and swing,
Stirring the blood with the wind of her wing,
It is well to be out where the road is long,
It is well to be where the waters sing,
And the green things start
From the old earth's heart,
And the birds are twitt'ring by twos apart;
For that is the time when life is strong,
Stronger than death or anything,
That is when life is a lusty song
On the lips of exultant Spring!

WHILE APRIL RAIN WENT BY

Under a budding hedge I hid
While April rain went by,
But little drops came slipping thru,
Fresh from a laughing sky:

A-many little scurrying drops,
Laughing the song they sing,
Soon found me where I sought to hide,
And pelted me with Spring.

And I lay back and let them pelt,
And dreamt deliciously
Of lusty leaves and lady-blossoms
And baby-buds I'd see

When April rain had laughed the land
Out of its wintry way,
And coaxed all growing things to greet
With gracious garb the May.

HUNTINGTON STREET—BROOKLYN

Huntington Street is a little street,
It's far from stylish and scarcely neat,
It starts at a dock and ends in a ditch;
You may go from one end, I don't care which,
Right to the other end all the way,
And you won't find much that is bright or gay.
But the little houses of Huntington Street
Are a pleasant sight for the eyes to greet,
Being old and simple and quaint and strong,
As they long have stood and will stand there long,
Each content with its cozy place,
And showing the world a cheerful face.

Now surely it was this sturdy smile
Which the little old houses wear all the while,
That lured the lean trees of Huntington Street
To hurry and hasten the Spring to greet,
With little green leaves spread out in the sun,
Ere any trees elsewhere had begun.
O first of all in the city's grey
They started their green dance one fine day,
And there wasn't in all the North so sweet
A spot as dingy Huntington Street,
Looking end to end, and I don't care which,
Where it starts in a dock or ends in a ditch.

KINE OF THE HILLS

Sweet kine of the hills,
When I call you at fall of night
It is sunlight that fills
Your udders white;
Thru the golden hours
That slowly pass
You crop the yellow grass
And eat the yellow flowers
That the full sun spills:
Your milk is sunlight,
Dear kine of the hills!

I drive you east
Toward the unveiling morn;
The silent laughter of the sun
Glints on each polished horn
And kisses every beast
And me, as we were one.

All day on the hills,
In the wild meadows,
In the whispering copse,
In the wavering shadows,
But longest in the sunlight—
The yellow wine that spills
In warm sweet waves about you!
And when I come and rout you
And shout you
To the West,
Where the clouds and the hills
Like parched lips overfain
The golden goblet drain
Of its last drops and its best,
It is sunlight—sunlight—sunlight that fills

Each yellow rounded udder,
Sweet kine of the hills!

Your shaggy coats are golden,
Your golden coats are warm;
Your large eyes are languid
As if no sudden storm
Ever curdled the calm sunlight
Or gave the hills alarm;
Your eyes are pools of sunlight,
Woven beams your coats so warm.

Here I draw from you
In the grey dusk,
As sweet as new wine,
As fragrant as musk,
The blood of gold flowers
And yellow grass
Strewn by the sun across the hills
And thru the crooked pass.
Music to my ears
Fall the streams that fill the pails,
A treasure to mine eyes,
A wealth that never fails;
Oh, life in my veins and a joy my heart
that fills
Is the milk of my kine, that was sunlight
on the hills!

NIGHTFALL IN A VALLEY

Silence and budding of stars,
And light mist over grey waters,
Immensities chaliced in darkness,
And the infinitesimal, infinite,
Mystical murmur of insects.

A NIGHT ON THE HILL

Once when the grey night held more of clouds than
of stars

And the wind was swift and cold, and full of a
troubling cry,

I quenched my lamp and opened the door and
dropped the bars

And went forth into a meadow, past fields of
shuddering rye,

And over a moor that ghastly lay under a ghastly
sky,

And I ran with a stumbling run that the wind
might blow more bitter by,

And I fell in weary delight by an old ash clenched
with scars,

And I trembled a-thrill with cold, and was content
to lie.

And the glory of God's wild mirth was revealed to me,
And I saw how the elements played at a game
thru space,

And the wind was mad with a vast impetuous glee,

And a starry laughter broke on the sky's pale face;

White naked runners in the dark, the clouds a-race,

And virginal snowy dancers veiled in lace;

And an ancient laughter roared thru the rocking tree,

And ripples of youthful joy sang the flowers of that
place.

And I lay like a mossy rock on the side of the hill,

And the spin of the rolling world was a dizzy thing,

And I heard in a moment when the winds were
suddenly still

The cherry and lusty song that the huge tongues
sing,

The tongues of flame leagues deep in earth's
hollowing;
Far-off I knew the great seas leapt in a ring;
And I rose with joy in my heart and peace on my will
And sought the fire on my hearth, and my home's
enfolding wing.

THANKSGIVING FOR OUR TASK

The sickle is dulled of the reaping and the threshing-
floor is bare;
The dust of night's in the air.
The peace of the weary is ours:
All day we have taken the fruit and the grain and
the seeds of the flowers.

The ev'ning is chill,
It is good now to gather in peace by the flames of
the fire.
We have done now the deed that we did for our need
and desire:
We have wrought our will.

And now for the boon of abundance and golden
increase,
And immured peace,
Shall we thank our God?
Bethink us, amid His indulgence, His terrible rod?

Shall we be as the maple and oak,
Strew the earth with our gold, giving only bare
boughs to the sky?
Nay, the pine stayeth green while the Winter growls
sullenly by,
And doth not revoke

For soft days or stern days the pledge of its
constancy.
Shall we not be
Also the same thru all days,
Giving thanks when the battle breaks on us, in toil
giving praise?

O Father who saw at the dawn,
That the folly of Pride would be the lush weed of
our sin,
There is better than that in our hearts, O enter
therein,
A light burneth, tho wan

And weak be the flame, yet it gloweth, our Humility!
Ah, how can it be
Trimmed o' the wick,
And replenished with oil to burn brightly and golden
and quick?

For deep in our hearts
We wish to be thankful thru lean years and fat
without change,
Knowing that here Thou hast set for the spirit a
range;
We would play well our parts,

Making America throb with the building of souls and
the glory of good;
Yea, and we would,
And before the last Autumn we will
Build a temple from ocean to ocean where deeds
never still

Melodiously shall proclaim
Thanksgiving forever that Thou hast set here to our
hand
So wondrous a mystical harvest, that Thou dost
demand
Sheaves bound in Thy name,

Yea, supersubstantial sheaves of strong souls that
have grown
Fain to be known

As the corn of Thine occident field:
O Yelder of All, can America worthily thank Thee
till such be her yield?

In the mellowing light
Of the goldenest days that precede the grey days of
the year,
We sing Thee our harvesting song and we pray Thee
to hear,
In the midst of Thy might:

Labor is given to us,
Let us give thanks!
Power worketh thru us,
Let us give thanks!
Not for what we have
(So might speak a slave)
Not for the garnering
Gratefully we sing,
But for the mighty thing
We must do, travailing!
For our task and for our strength;
For the journey and its length;
For our dauntless eagerness;
For our humbling weariness;
For these, for these, O Father
Let us give thanks!
For these, O Mighty Father,
Take Thou our thanks!

PLAY

What games life plagues us with!
What could be stranger than this,?—
I rolling swiftly to town,
A little convenient trip,
In the early afternoon train,
Gliding thru miles of city,
Homes and mills and the rest,
And reading in an old book
An ancient wonderful story,—
Until my mind is led
And held and spelled and bounden
By one chance beautiful face;
And a moment flashes to life
Like the great moments of time,
Like that I read about
In the ancient wonderful story;
The goodness of God is shown
In a light that blinds and bewilders,
Because one being has sight
And another the marvel of beauty,
And thru these two are met
The current of things ineffable,
Strange deep primal emotions,
The flowing of good to good,
The calling of life to life,
The yearning of beauty to beauty.
O dawns in the Dawn of Time,
O meeting of boy and maiden
Beside untroubled waters,
O wonder of primal glances,
O wild sweet thrill of first love,
Strangely made manifest
To me rolling into town
In the early afternoon train,

Thru one chance beautiful face,
Thru one wild beauty of woman,
Thru one deep recognition!

COLD BEAUTY

Cold lips to love not but obey,
Cold eyes that grant no passion sway:
This is her beauty in the day.

Ah, but I know how hot and bright
When bared to one dear lover's sight
Her beauty flames and burns at night!

A CRY

Only thus far to go,
But to the gates of love
(Long have I been!)

Only to glimpse
The glories within!

Ah let me enter and know,
Even by sin!

WRITTEN BY THE SEA

The waves come,
The waves flow,
The sands crumble,
Yield and go;
The steadfast cliff
Heeds not the sea;
Now which is like
My love for thee?

ROMA MATER SEMPAETERNA

The blue skies bend and are about her furled,
A maiden mantle; and with lilies bright
The sun daywhiles doth crown her, and at night
With stars her garment's border is empearled.
Not a king's favorite, perfumed and curled,
Is half so fair; no queen of martial might
So potent as the Mother of the Light,
The Mary of the Cities of the World!

Eternal Mother, at whose breasts of white
The infant Church was suckled and made strong
With the sweet milk of heavenly Truth and Love,
O thou that art all nations set above,
Strengthen us still because the way is long,
Mary of Cities, Mother of the Light!

MARY'S BABY

Joseph, mild and noble, bent above the straw:
A pale girl, a frail girl, suffering he saw;
"O my Love, my Mary, my bride, I pity thee!"
"Nay, Dear," said Mary, "All is well with me!"

"BABY, MY BABY, O MY BABE." she sang.

Suddenly the golden night all with music rang.

Angels leading shepherds, shepherds leading sheep:
The silence of worship broke the mother's sleep.

All the meek and lowly of all the world were there;
Smiling, she showed them that her Child was fair.

"BABY, MY BABY." kissing Him she said.

Suddenly a flaming star through the heavens sped.

Three old men and weary knelt them side by side,
The world's wealth forswearing, majesty and pride;
Worldly might and wisdom before the Babe bent low:
Weeping, maid Mary said "I love Him so!"

"BABY, MY BABY," and the Baby slept.

Suddenly on Calvary all the olives wept.

THE WOMEN OF THE SHAWLS

By my windows, which look out
On a polite and pleasant street,
There often pass
Women of the dingy quarter down the hill;
Creatures of primary faith and primitive doubt,
Brief love, and narrow faith and small deceit,
Brief sleep, long toil, a roof, a rag, and meat,
Patience beneath unrealized defeat,
Mortgaged too deep to Fate, alas!
To leave much scope for will.
And they are slow and large and ponderous,
And are not beautiful as all women should be,
And under Life's incessant mockery
That by which woman chiefly is beautiful,
Wonder and sweet illusion, has quite gone.
Most like a burdened river they go on,
With no complaint, no choice, no change, no thrill,
Brown clods with so much muscle, so much nerve,
A womb and two breasts each, who still must serve
As Fate directs, until
Fate bids them be quite still——
I fancy they are placid when they go.
And so
They pass, each folded in a sullen shawl,
Death's froward symbol, Life's ironic pall.

THE ITALIAN DEAD MARCH

Lo, I know not whom they bear
Thru the grey streets,
Thru the grey dulness of life,
With such a trouble of music!
O strange folk,
Alien-brotherly people,
How have you put God's grief in this your dirge?
Oh, I could weep away my soul,
Upon which love and joy await,
I could weep it away
To those strains.
Thru this grey afternoon
A gleaming sword flashes,
A visionary sword
Bites thru the day,
Pierces to my soul with instant anguish.
Who grasped this tear of God
And made it music?

Who goes there in the black wain
With gaudy flowers and flags and sleekened
mourners?
Who? — what?
A boxful of ashes.
And yet the petty futile funeral rite
Convicts my soul of immortality,
Of old ineffable mystery convicts it,
Humbles it,
Dissolves it,
Blows it as sand,
Devastates it,
Pierces it thru,
Because of this lamentation of brass trumpets
Filled with a tear of God.

THE WOMAN SPEAKS ✕

Free me that I may help you to be free!

Brother, the night was long and full of terror;

Let us forgive each other every error

Before dawn breaks; when light comes let us see

No haunting phantom here 'twixt you and me.

Free me and I will help you to be free!

Give me my freedom and you shall be free!

When the dark door swings back on rusted hinges,

Wish you a comrade or a slave who cringes?

How will you face the future without me?

What if my groping hands have found the key?

Give me my freedom and you shall be free!

Lo, thru the night I've served you faithfully!

Mine were the lips that kissed you and no other;

Me you have called Beloved, Wife, and Mother;

Now what I claim is only love's own fee,

The right to share Time's burdens equally!

Lo, on the road 'tis written: For the Free!

Free me and evermore you shall be free!

You make me your chief burden and are bowed;

Let me arise and I shall be but proud

To struggle with you toward the day to be;

Brother, God's word is given now to me:

The Future is for Comrades Strong and Free!

THE BROTHERHOOD OF ASPIRATION

Little brown brother on some coral isle
Over long leagues of the sunny world from me,
Nakedly, joyously riding over the waves
To bring home stores of fish to her you love,
Whose lithe brown limbs and firm brown breasts
are yours

In the sweet hours of starlight and of rest——
I, who can never see you, nor but guess
Dimly at all your strange free passionate ways,
I who am one of this insatiable race
Whose souls gigantic build impossibly great
And sink and dwarf beneath what they have built——
I who have not your freedom, sun and wave,
Limbs naked to the winds and passions frank,
Who have instead the elaborate gloze of the arts
And myriad guards against the stings of life
And yet am not so joyous——Brother, I,
Across the world, across all time, across
The incredible gulf of custom, greet you now,
You and your Love; and she who is my Love
Greets you with me, because in spite of all,
We know, we feel, we thrill to feel that we
Are one indeed in that which only matters,
That aspiration which began in night,
But yearns and burns and will set upward always
Thru dark and doubt and sin and our despair,
Until some perfect day shall be attained,
Sunlit with wisdom; then shall love be winged,
And understanding perfect, and divine
Free energy shall build the house of peace.

HE WILL SPEAK

Hail, Pharaoh, how mighty is thy rod!

Thy throne is lifted up exceeding high!

Purple thy wine, on purple thou dost lie,
While myriad slaves who mould the strawless sod
Slink by scarce murmuring, fearful of thy nod.

Thou say'st to them, "Unceasing shall you ply
Even to death, for I am master, I
Am law and fate and art, and only god!"

Nay, there thou liest, Pharaoh, in thy pride:

Wherefore thy house shall crumble as the sands,

Thy wealth avail thee naught, thy arms be weak;
For there's a God who bides His time and tide,
Moses and Jesus wait within His hands,
There is a God in Israel, Who will speak!

~

THE POET GRIEVES IN WINTER

The Winter has entered my mind,
The Winter, and how can I sing?
All joy withers under that wind,
A tragic and terrible thing;
It is well to be glad in the Spring,
With no wish of the spirit confined,
But who can be joyous and sing
When Winter has entered the mind?

The snow has laid hold of my heart,
That was fluent and leaping with love
And with hope and high purpose astart,
And with dreams that should lift me above
All the host that in misery move;
But how can I glory in art
While my brothers are outcast from love?
Oh, the snow has laid hold of my heart!

And the cold has come into my soul
Where only the sunlight should be,
Or the fires of the hearth to console,
Or the flambeaux of revelry;
But the things, Oh the things that I see
And the things I am hearing of dole,
Have taken my comfort from me,
And the cold has come into my soul!

THE FINAL MERCY

The hearts of the saved had been hardened and the
brotherly bonds dissolved,
And the long-wearied seraphs were smiling that the
ultimate plan was evolved,
And the angel who writes in the book had put down
his diamond pen
When Finis was written at last to the feverish record
of men;
And the dim multitudinous stars had been swept to
the place that is not,
And the Lord was pleased as He had not been since
ever the Plan was begot.
And none had a thought for the damned, and the
word of their doom was true,
In the deeps of forgotten fires they were dying for-
ever anew:
Then Jesus remembered and looked, and wept, and
the tears that fell
Quenched with a sound of music the impotent flames
of Hell.

And all I had seen before was a glory to be endured,
But mine eyes were dazed by the beauty of the Host
of the Damned restored.

WHEN MY LOVE IS SAD

O who would dance, tho the piping was never so merry?
My Love hath troubled eyes, her feet are still;
I will sit at her feet, I will sing very
Low songs, that peace her troubled eyes may fill.

WHEN SHE CAME NOT

I thought I heard her when the wind would pass
Down thru the piney trees, the tangled grass;
I thought I heard her exquisitely near
When no sound was.
I thought I heard her little feet
Over the grey beach-pebbles beat,
And that I need but lift mine eyes
And see her there without surprise,
Knowing that she had come again
To kiss from me her scar of pain.
I thought, alas!
That she was exquisitely near
When no sound was,
And raised my head, and threw my arms apart; but
she
Was nowhere 'twixt the forest and the sea.

FLUNG DOWN THE WIND

Do you know why the rivers are flooded?
I wept nine nights on the hills.
Do you know why the winds are crying?
I told them my bitter ills.
Do you know why the trees are blasted?
They saw me broken with woe!
I am broken, O winds and waters.
Be bitter and tell her so!

O what is the life of the rivers?
To be filled with the rain of love!
And the joy of the winds is the gleaning
Of the million kisses thereof;
I am hot as the pollen of poppies
For a blossoming bosom I know:
Breathe out your desirous incense,
O flowers, and tell her so!

Flow gently and gently, waters,
And winds go whispering low;
Breathe peace on her heart, O forest,
O flowers, your sweetness show,
That her eyes may be like the waters
And her thoughts like the flowers grow,
And she grant surcease of my pain, and peace
In the forest of her hair, Ah so!

BLANCHE LOUISE

Blanche Louise, O Blanche Louise,
Like the brown leaves is thy brown hair,
The leaves that crown tall autumn trees
And fall thru yellow autumn air——
So fell my hopes! —— Oh brown as these
Thy dryad hair is, Blanche Louise!

Blanche Louise, O cold, cold Blanche,
Thy brow is like unsullied snow
That's whitely spread o'er limb and branch,
So pale, so soft —— but well I know
How fall the snows in avalanche——
So fell thy frown on me, cold Blanche!

Blanche Louise, my Love Louise,
The calm, the color of thine eyes
Are those of blue pacific seas;
Yet as the terrible typhoons rise
In them, a tempest rose in these
That wrecked my life, O my Louise!

O my Louise, O Blanche my Love,
A flute-voice from thy flower-lips
Flows musically when they move;
Yet once thy words were lashing whips,
Thou drov'st me with the sting thereof
Far from thee, Blanche Louise, my Love.

One fairest flower, Blanche Louise,
Rarely in tropic forest found,
Breathes on the finder fatal peace;
So I am in a lifeless swoond
Since in my quest thou bad'st me cease,
O Fatal Flower, O Blanche Louise!

ART THOU LONELY, LITTLE HEART?

Art thou lonely, Little Heart?
If, because I think thou art,
 I have joy as well as sorrow,
Do I play the selfish part?
 Nay, for I would have thee borrow
Balm from my own lonely heart.

We are youthful, and we dream
Things world-weary people deem
 Foolish, and if we should tell them
They would frown—or smile!—and seem
 Only anxious to dispel them:
But we two must have our dream,

Tho they cannot understand——
Heart and soul and mind and hand
 Busied with important matters——
Tho, for sympathy, a bland
 Tolerant smile they give, that shatters
Dreams they do not understand.

Then to me, Dear Lonely Heart,
Bring thy dreams of life and art,
 And in dreaming them together
Joy and peace we miss apart
 Will be ours in goodly mether:
Come, Dear Little Lonely Heart!

IN A VOLUME OF YEATS' LYRICAL POEMS

He who made the songs within this book
Heard in his cradle the dream-dropping stir
Of wings the Shining Ones above him shook;
They moved beside him with impetuous whirl,
Singing strange songs, what time his young feet took
Their sport where the loud-shouting surges ever
recur.

He who made the songs that follow here,
When his time came to love, heard Aengus sing
A song that woke his heart to faith and fear;
The birds of Aengus in a dappled ring,
With swoon-sweet music, swiftly circled near:
A lyric flame, white, passionate, deep in his heart
did spring.

And he who made these songs I send to thee
Has found the way into the Shadowy Lands,
And has been kissed by all the Immortal Shee;
And they have sung to him, treading the moon-
pale sands
Between Hy-Brasil's woods and the Shadowy Sea;
And he has found the Rose of Beauty, led by
dream-light hands.

And men have said, and thou and I have said,
No lovelier songs have risen nor may rise
Than his, who knew that Beauty was not dead,
And found her sleeping under Danaan skies,
And kissed her, woke her, heard her song, and shed
Its faint far haunting melodies over all hoarse
earth-cries.

But tho the secrets of the Shadowy Lands,
The Shining People and the Danaan skies,
And human hearts he so well understands,
Have stirred to wondrous songs beneath his hands,
There had been tenderer strains, more passionate
cries,
Had he but seen thy hair—its shadowy strands
Drawn backward, fillet-bound—had he but known
how lies
Eternal flame of mystery deep in thy fathomless
eyes!

Shining Ones, Immortal Shee: the Host of the
Immortals in Gaelic legend. Hy-Brasil: the Land of
Immortality. Danaan: pertaining to the Immortals.
Aengus, the God of Love

ON AN OLD THEME

The white rose seems too proud,
 But its heart is gold;
So is the heart of my Love,
 When all is told.

And the red rose is passionate flame
 'Round a heart of gold;
So, ah so is my Love
 When all is told!

HIGH TIDE, WARM NOON

Over the sandy bar
In the midst of the little bay,
Full high, full quiet the waters are,
And the winds have fallen away,
And the sun's warm hand that has stilled them,
points
On the dial, to mid-day.

O brimming bowl of noon!
O draught of warmth and light!
O calmness more than night!
O rapture like a swoon!
High tide, warm noon in the world,
And in the world of my heart
Warm noon, high tide; for thou art
O Love, like a bird who has furled
Her wings after morning flight—
Thou hast come, O beauteous and bright,
At last thou hast come to my heart,
And drooped with a rapturous swoon
In the warmth of its burning noon.

And the waters over the bar
And the winds, all quiet are;
And the bay is blue and deep,
And the golden sun pours over the blue
A warmth like the warmth of sleep;
And we are asleep and a-swoon,
Yet we are awake and a-wing,
Too greatly glad to sing,
But I like the winds, like the waters you,
Are hushed in the kiss of noon.

MY LADY PASSES

A breath of fragrance wafted by—
It is my Lady!
Like a bit of the glad blue sky,
Thru sullen streets and shady,
She glances by,
My Lady!
Tho from my window I but see
Her passage brief,
The rhythm of the world thrills into me,
Cloud-rhythm and wave-rhythm and dancing leaf!

THE LOVER REMEMBERS HIS LADY'S VOICE

Who dreams of music sadder than the sigh
Of winds that fail mid quivering leaves and die,
And sweeter than the rippling of a stream,
And far more passionate than songs that seem
The very throbbing of young lovers' hearts,
And exquisite beyond a master's arts?
O come desirous dreamer, you shall hear
A music like the piercing of a spear
By Aengus flung athwart the stricken soul;
Despairing dreamer, have your dreams made whole!
We shall go to my Lady, who will greet
Our coming with a welcome glad and sweet,
And we shall hear the beauty of her words
Singing about us like the mystic birds;
We shall be wrapped in wonder, and rejoice
In the strange harmonies that are her voice:
Oh music such as your fain spirit seeks,
Dreamer, is heard when my beloved speaks.

BLANCHETTE SINGS ON AN APRIL EVE

My lover gave three kisses,
He kissed me thrice when we met,
And each kiss lingers with me
Like a tune I cannot forget:
There are duties that wait my doing
And the moments are passing—yet—
My lover gave three kisses
To me, to me when we met!

Like the winds of the Spring is my lover,
Impetuous, fain of delight:
Quickly he drew me to him
And he held me close in his might:
He called me as fair as the blossoms
That are making the branches bright.

He called me as fair as the blossoms,
But I know when he comes to-night
He will say there's no starry beauty
Like my own eyes' little light—
He will tell me that when he holds me
Close to his heart to-night.

O my cheeks and my throat he kindled
With kisses to-day, but my mouth
Was locked like the lips of the meadow
In the length of the Winter's drouth;
To-night he will lure me, compel me,
With the warmth of the wind of the South,
I shall throw back my head, and my lover
Will waken the Spring on my mouth!

TWO SONNETS OF AN ABANDONED
SEQUENCE IN ANTIQUE MANNER

THE LOVER TELLETH HOW HE FIRST SAW
HIS LADY IN THE MONTH OF MAY

The month when all the flowers spring so bright
From out their wint'ry prison in the mold,
First budding shyly furled, but soon, more bold,
Baring their bosoms to the sun's warm light—
Oh in that month I first did know delight
And love and longing; for I did behold
The fairest bud that ever did unfold
Its pearly loveliness to human sight.

Ye flowers of May, I grant that ye be fair;
Tall trees, new-leaved, a-sway, I grant ye grace;
Ye warbling birds, your songs are sweet and rare;
But Oh, fair flowers, ye fade before her face!
Sweet trees, beside her form ye have no place!
Vain birds, her song, herself, are past compare!

THE LOVER PRAISETH THE FITNESS OF
HIS LADY'S NAME

Oh they were skilled in gentle speech of France,
And learned in the lore of flowers, and wise
In prophecy, who did her name devise,
For never name so fit was found by chance;
But from the flowers of an old romance
It was distilled, a fragrant, precious prize
Wherein the subtle sweet of poesy lies,
And of all things fair-seeming to the glance:

Rose Blanche they called her, as if they would say
White Rose! Oh could I name all beauties o'er,
What fair name could I find to fit her more,
Who is like some white rose-flower of the May?
—Like yet unlike, being sometimes all aglow
With vermil blushes no white rose could know.

EVENING

(From the Hungarian of Josaph Kiss.)

To walk among the noisy crowds, to stand
Alone as once, is nevermore my fate,
For one walks with me, gently, hand in hand.

The majesty of thought is in her state,
Her eyes are subtle, yet she goes with me
Down the same road and helps me bear my weight.

Nobler than I and far more pure is she,
Like as the soul is purer than the word;
Yet are no friends more surely true than we.

And where the whispers of her steps are heard
The road breathes flow'rs, as if her golden hair
Were magic rain; with stars the dust is stirred.

"Before my soul and yours that is so rare
Could meet, a long life passed, and now," I cry,
"The sunset road, and dusk awaiting there!"

With pressure of the hand she makes reply
Caressingly, "But evening is fair!"
I hush before one nobler-souled than I.

IMMORTAL DESIRE

(From the Hungarian of Josaph Kiss.)

The hastening wings of the impatient moments
Would I might bind from any further flight,
That so forever, clasping thus your knees,
Bent in the dust, yet raised in ecstasies,
Your strange smile I might watch, thru day and night!

O to gaze ever on your sorrowful beauty,
And hold forever free of fear and strife
The lordship of your fine immaculate soul,
And let this sudden moment's rapture roll
In ebbless tides thru an immortal life!

If ever the silken curtains of your lashes,
Withdraw before the deep lamps of your eyes,
Might so remain, and never in falling break
The spell of my devotion, never shake
The sacred calm that fills our mutual skies!

The smouldering fervid fires of a life-time
Burst into flame and burn before you now,
And tho my life has been an empty jar,
It is a shrine, reflecting your bright star,
It is a coronal, being placed on your brow!

OH WHY SO LATE?

(From the Hungarian of Josaph Kiss.)

Oh why so late, when the leaves are falling,
And far to the southward the crane is gone?
Why in the flush of the vernal dawn
Did we not hear each other calling?

When the lark rose with a song of rapture,
Surely together we should have heard!
The glory promised in that wild word
Surely then we had learned to capture!

Oh the tides of intoxication
We two missed who have met so late,
Mocked by that mystery of fate,
Even this joy half lamentation!

I HAVE RETURNED

(From the Hungarian of Josaph Kiss.)

I have returned and set my wearied feet
 Upon the accustomed path I sought to flee:
I have grown wise and know that this is meet;
 I have been chastened and have learned to see.

The flood of my desire did not fail,
 And toward delight until the last I yearned:
Only, I saw the sun sink low, and pale;
 I saw winged spirits broken, and I learned.

I sailed the seas and found no Happy Isles;
 To the old port my battered ship comes in:
Some task there is I yet may do daywhiles;
 Night will come soon and cover away my sin.

I sought too greatly and my heart is void:
 Spirit of Life, altho my time is brief,
Pour yet one molten moment unalloyed——
 Not joy, not joy, but some redeeming grief!





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